



# Report to the Governor and General Assembly

Virginia's P-16 Education Council

October 2007

# Virginia's P-16 Education Council Membership

## **Dr. Thomas R. Morris**

Chairman  
Secretary of Education

## **The Honorable Kristen Amundsen**

Member, Virginia House of Delegates  
Fairfax County, Virginia

## **Dr. Billy K. Cannaday, Jr.**

Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Virginia Department of Education

## **William Davis, Jr.**

Principal  
Norfolk Technical Center

## **Dr. Glenn DuBois**

Chancellor  
Virginia Community College System

## **Dr. Mark Emblidge**

President  
Virginia Board of Education

## **Dr. Pamela Fox**

President  
Mary Baldwin College

## **Libby Garvey**

Member  
Arlington County School Board

## **Dr. Gayle Evans Hefty**

PASS Coach, Walnut Hill Elementary  
Richmond, Virginia

## **The Honorable Janet D. Howell**

Member, Senate of Virginia  
Reston, Virginia

## **Dr. Daniel LaVista**

Executive Director  
State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

## **Dr. Virginia McLaughlin**

Dean, School of Education  
College of William & Mary

## **Princess Moss**

President  
Virginia Education Association

## **Lloyd U. Noland III**

Chairman Emeritus, Noland Company  
Newport News, Virginia

## **The Honorable H. Russell Potts, Jr.**

Member, Senate of Virginia  
Winchester, Virginia

## **James A. Rothrock**

Commissioner  
Department of Rehabilitative Services

## **The Honorable Robert Tata**

Member, Virginia House of Delegates  
Virginia Beach, Virginia

## **David Temple**

Program Officer  
National Science Foundation

## **Lisa Thomas**

Executive Director, Child Development Resources  
Williamsburg, Virginia

## **Alan Toxopeus**

Chairman  
Virginia Community College System

## **The Honorable Onzlee Ware**

Member, Virginia House of Delegates  
Roanoke, Virginia

## **Alan L. Wurtzel**

Past Chairman, State Council of Higher Education  
and Chairman Emeritus, Circuit City Stores

# Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Purpose and History of the Council</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Why a P-16 approach is needed .....	5
A brief history of Virginia's P-16 Education Council .....	5
The Council's 2006 recommendations .....	5
<b>Activities and Accomplishments</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Adopting a common standard for college and workforce readiness .....	6
Aligning high school standards with the expectations of colleges and employers .....	8
Increasing the number of students completing rigorous courses in high school .....	10
Expanding options for students to blend rigorous academics with career and technical education .....	12
Improving other transitions .....	13
Creating a robust longitudinal-data system .....	14
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>16</b>
Continue the P-16 Education Council .....	16
Expand representation on the Council .....	16
Continue focus on readiness .....	16



## Executive Summary

**R**aising the educational attainment of Virginia's population remains Virginia's greatest challenge for continued economic prosperity – one requiring concerted efforts across educational levels and among education, business and government. Virginia's P-16 Education Council provides a structure for the collaboration that is needed to meet this challenge.

The Council is concluding its second year of operations. In the first year, Council members examined data, consulted with national experts, and worked with Virginia's education leaders to identify the most pressing needs and recommend goals and strategies to address them. The Governor accepted the Council's recommendations, and in its second year the Council dedicated itself to implementing those recommendations.

The Council's primary focus has been on efforts to develop a common standard for college and workforce readiness and align high school standards and assessments to that definition. Virginia is making good progress in this area with participation from public education, institutions of higher learning, business leaders, and national experts.

Encouraging progress is also evident in programs to encourage more students to take rigorous courses in high school. Virginia has launched exciting initiatives to better integrate rigorous academics with career and technical education (CTE) and raise the quality and profile of CTE in the Commonwealth. Significant attention is being paid to the transitions into various levels of education. Several Start Strong preschool pilots are under way to expand access to quality preschool. Ninth-grade transition programs are growing, and educators have redoubled efforts to increase high school graduation and college degree completion rates. The Virginia Department of Education, schools of education, the State Council of Higher Education and the Community College System continue to strengthen their capacity to use data to inform education policy decisions.

These initiatives can be counted as successes of the P-16 approach led by the Council and provide a strong foundation for continued collaboration. The Council recommends continuing the P-16 approach and maintaining a focus on school, college, and workforce readiness.

For the Council's 2006 full report and recommendations, see <http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/P-16Council/P-16Council-InitialReport.pdf>.



# Purpose and History of the Council

## Why a P-16 approach is needed

Fundamental changes are taking place in the global economy and in the skills and competencies needed to succeed in it. There is widespread agreement that current levels of educational achievement are not sufficient to sustain our economy and standard of living. Raising educational achievement will require concerted efforts on the part of many stakeholders, with significant implications for education policy and practice at the state and local levels. The P-16 Education Council provides a structure for the collaboration that is needed to meet these challenges.

## A brief history of Virginia's P-16 Education Council

Virginia's P-16 Education Council was created in 2005 to facilitate smooth transitions across Virginia's education continuum, from preschool through college. The Council is chaired by the Governor's Secretary of Education and includes executive-level representation from the Board and Virginia Department of Education, the State Board for Community Colleges and the Community College System, the State Council for Higher Education at the board and staff level, public and independent higher education institutions, state and local elected officials, business leaders, the Virginia Education Association, the National Science Foundation, an early childhood center, and additional agencies. Support for formation of the Council was provided by the National Governors Association Honor States Grant, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

During its first year of deliberations, the Council examined data, consulted with national experts, and worked with Virginia's education leaders to identify the most pressing needs and recommend goals and strategies to address them. Based on its findings, the Council made preliminary recommendations in October 2006. These recommendations were accepted by the Governor, and in its second year of operation the Council began implementing them through its member agencies.

## The Council's 2006 recommendations

The Council's recommendations focused on two areas: readiness for postsecondary education and work, and comprehensive data systems. The Council recommended working with the Board of Education and public and private colleges and universities to adopt a common standard for college readiness among institutions of higher education and public schools. The Council further recommended working with appropriate parties to ensure that high school course content and assessments are aligned with the expectations of postsecondary educators and employers; to improve the preparation of middle school students for rigorous high school work; to increase the number of students completing rigorous courses in high school; and to improve student transitions along the educational continuum. In the area of data systems, the Council recommended creating a P-16 data system with appropriate safeguards that will permit sophisticated analyses of the effectiveness of Virginia's education system.

# Activities and Accomplishments

## 6

### Adopting a common standard for college and workforce readiness

The need to improve college and workforce readiness has been high on the agenda of state and national policy organizations for the last decade. Much work has been done to define the expectations of colleges and employers, and Virginia is drawing on these existing resources to inform its own definition of readiness.

- **ADP Benchmarks.** In 2004, the national organization Achieve published *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma that Counts*. This report includes English and mathematics benchmarks that describe the specific content and skills that graduates must have mastered by the time they leave high school if they expect to succeed in postsecondary education or in high-performance, high-growth jobs. The benchmarks are based on two years of empirical research with college faculty and front-line managers that detailed the “must have” competencies for success in these arenas. The benchmarks are part of the American Diploma Project (ADP), a network that now includes 30 states dedicated to making sure every high school graduate is prepared for college or work.

The Council used these nationally validated benchmarks as a starting point for Virginia’s college and workplace readiness standard. The Secretary of Education sought feedback from the higher education

and business communities regarding whether the benchmarks accurately reflect the critical knowledge and skills high school graduates must have to succeed in college and the workplace.

**Thirty colleges participated in a review of these benchmarks**, including ten community colleges, ten public four-year colleges, and ten independent four-year colleges. At each campus, separate multidisciplinary teams were formed to review the mathematics and English benchmarks and provide feedback to the Secretary. On the whole, the faculty teams validated the national benchmarks and provided guidance regarding which areas of knowledge and skill are most critical for success in entry-level college courses. They also provided insight into some of the common academic weaknesses they have identified in entering students.

- **College Board Standards for College Success.** Another set of national benchmarks was developed by the College Board to identify the knowledge and skills that college faculty expect in freshman students. In addition to specifying content requirements, the Standards for College Success create a vertical alignment, or road map, of critical thinking skills from sixth grade to twelfth grade representing the requirements for success in college.



### ■ **ACT College Readiness**

**Standards.** The College Readiness Standards developed by ACT describe widely shared learning goals and educational expectations, and address the types of skills needed for success in high school and beyond.

### ■ **Virginia's Workplace Readiness**

**Skills.** Researchers at the Weldon Cooper Center at the University of Virginia interviewed more than 500 Virginia employers to find out which skills they looked for in their entry-level employees. Over a period of 3 ½ years, a study was conducted that captured the thoughts of employers regarding entry-level jobs requiring less than a four-year college degree. The results of that study were summarized in a report titled *Virginia's Changing Workplace: Employers Speak*. This study provided the foundation for the Virginia's Workplace Readiness Skills, developed by the Virginia Beach City Public Schools' Office of Technical and Career Education through a grant from Opportunity Inc., Hampton Roads' Workforce Development Board. The result is a set of 13 specific skills, ranging from mathematics and reading skills to critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork and work-ethic characteristics.

### ■ **NASA efforts in science and engineering.**

Through a partnership with NASA Langley Research Center, the Secretary of Education has convened panels of practicing scientists and engineers in industry and academia to identify the content most important for all high school graduates to know in science (beginning with chemistry and physics) and engineering. The final panel reports were presented to the Virginia Department of Education.

Taken together, the ADP benchmarks, College Board standards, workplace readiness skills, and NASA science and engineering content reports will help Virginia to articulate a common definition of college and workplace readiness.

## Aligning high school standards with the expectations of colleges and employers

While work continues to articulate Virginia's readiness definition, the P-16 Council has begun to measure the alignment of Virginia's current Standards of Learning (SOL) against some of the existing nationally validated college-readiness standards.

### ADP Network and College Board alignment studies

The Secretary of Education appointed an Alignment Team, including high school, community college and university educators, Virginia Department of Education and Governor's Office personnel, and business leaders, to examine the alignment of Virginia's SOL against the ADP benchmarks. Complementing these efforts, the Virginia Department of Education worked with the College Board and ACT to measure the alignment of the SOL with the Standards for College Success and College Readiness Standards.

Although these alignment analyses are not all complete, the teams are seeing commonalities across the different measures. In general, all three efforts are showing strong alignment between the SOL and the other benchmarks, with few but important exceptions — areas where the SOL go above and beyond the external standards, or where they fall short of meeting those standards.

In the case of some of the benchmarks, Virginia has corresponding standards in elective rather than

required courses. Because the benchmarks describe the knowledge and skills that all students need to succeed in college and the workplace, Virginia's requirements are judged to fall short of college readiness in these areas. Furthermore, in some areas Virginia's standards may be aligned with the other benchmarks, but at a lower level of cognitive complexity.

- Where there is broad agreement about gaps between external standards and Virginia's standards, there is a strong case for updating the state standards. In the preliminary analysis this appears to be the situation in some areas of mathematics (primarily in data interpretation, probability and statistics; mathematical reasoning and problem solving), English/Language Arts (primarily in communication skills, media literacy, and logic).
- Where a gap appears against one set of benchmarks but not others, the Alignment Team will continue the process of determining the significance of the gap and the importance of closing it. The Board of Education will have to weigh any proposed changes to the SOL with the feasibility of adding more content to a tight curriculum, and with the consequences of reducing emphasis on content judged through this process to be less critical.

It is anticipated that the alignment analyses will be completed in the next several months, and the P-16 Education Council will provide feedback to the Board of Education to consider in the scheduled review of mathematics SOL beginning in 2008 and the English/Language Arts and science SOL beginning in 2009.

### Study of remediation in community colleges

Concurrently, the Virginia Community College System completed a study of the academic preparedness of recent high school graduates enrolled in Virginia's community colleges. The objectives of the study were to identify the current number of recent high school graduates enrolled in developmental education courses and the primary subject matter areas in which the students are enrolled, to examine the methods used by the community colleges to determine the need for developmental education, and to formulate strategies for addressing academic weaknesses before high school graduation.

The findings indicate that while recent Virginia high school graduate enrollment in community colleges increased 28 percent from 2003 to 2006, the percentage of those students who received recommendations for remediation in reading and mathematics, based on placement scores, remained constant. In 2006 developmental education was recommended for 76.8 percent of recent high school graduates in mathematics, 31.5 percent of students in reading and 39.3 percent of students in writing.

The Community College System recommended several strategies to address college readiness in the Commonwealth. These include reviewing and improving data collection structures across higher education and K-12 sectors to create a more robust reporting system that will allow institutions to better prepare students, and re-examining the placement test used in the community colleges, including use of a diagnostic component to help colleges target instruction to students' particular areas of weakness. The report recommends disseminating best practices in remediation and model communication strategies between colleges and local school divisions to encourage an increased level of collaboration.

These results of the study have been published (see [http://www.vccs.edu/Portals/0/ContentAreas/AcademicServices/NGAReportAugust\\_final20070912.pdf](http://www.vccs.edu/Portals/0/ContentAreas/AcademicServices/NGAReportAugust_final20070912.pdf)) and will be shared with school divisions and institutions of higher education to inform them where additional collaboration, policy decisions or program adjustments should be considered.

### Workforce Readiness Forum

In collaboration with the Virginia Society for Human Resource Management State Council, the Virginia Department of Education presented a Workforce Planning Forum this year titled ***Accelerating Virginia's Workforce Readiness to Ensure Competitive Advantage in the 21st Century***. The forum included group discussions among educators, HR professionals, economic developers and others on strategies to accelerate the workforce readiness of the population. Common recommendations across groups focused on strengthening partnerships

among public education, higher education (including community colleges), business and workforce development; ensuring that the content, context and delivery of education at all levels is relevant for learners; and smoothing the transitions between education sectors and from school to work (e.g., through career coaches and mentors).

## Increasing the number of students completing rigorous courses in high school

### Commonwealth Scholars Program

The State Scholars Initiative is a national program to encourage students to take a rigorous course of study in high school. The model includes presentations to eighth-grade students by local business leaders to help students understand the choices available to them after high school, and the level of education and skill they will need to succeed in their chosen paths. To qualify as Scholars, students must complete a predefined core course of study that is more demanding than the requirements for Virginia's Standard Diploma, but not as demanding as those for the Advanced Studies Diploma. The program provides incentives and recognition to students who are pursuing this course of study. Virginia won a competitive federal grant from the Western Interstate Compact for Higher Education to pilot its version of the initiative, the Commonwealth Scholars Program.

The program was implemented through a public-private partnership with the Virginia Career Education Foundation (VCEF) in 11 school divisions

in 2006-07: Albemarle County, Alexandria, City of Bristol, Carroll County, Chesterfield County, Henry County, Lancaster County, Nottoway County, City of Richmond, Roanoke County and Scott County. The program is expanding to Buchanan County, Dickenson County, Norfolk, Pittsylvania County, and Portsmouth in 2007-08, with supplemental funding from the Workforce Investment Act made available by the Governor's Senior Advisor for Workforce. In addition, Piedmont Virginia Community College is implementing the program with five local school divisions in its service area. While additional time will be required to measure student course-taking outcomes, early results include increased business engagement with schools and strong support from the participating school divisions. Funds are available to continue the program in 2007-08, at which time preliminary outcomes will be available.

According to the national director of the State Scholars Initiative, Virginia's program stands out among the 24 participating states because of our coordination of initiatives and funding streams at the state level, its focus on career and technical education, how much Virginia has accomplished in 16 months (largely by leveraging other funds and programs), the support the program has received from the workforce community, and the focus on postsecondary transition.

In recognition of Virginia's outstanding performance with this program, Commonwealth Scholars staff members were asked to make a presentation to the U.S. Department of Education in the fall of 2007, and to attend a national summit on academic rigor and relevance in Boston in the spring of 2008.

## Advanced Placement and dual enrollment

**Advanced Placement.** Advanced Placement (AP) courses and examinations provide an opportunity for students to take college-level courses and earn transferable college credit while in high school. Courses are taught by high school teachers following guidelines developed, published and monitored by the College Board. The exams are standardized nationally, and the program prepares students for postsecondary education by exposing them to the expectations of college-level courses. Virginia ranks among the top states for participation in AP courses, and for the proportion of students earning scores of 3 or higher on AP examinations – generally the score required for students to earn college credit. In 2007 the number of Virginia public high school students taking AP exams increased by more than 11 percent, and the number of exam scores of 3 or higher for these students rose by 12.3 percent, compared with 9.3 percent for public school students nationwide.

This year Virginia was selected as one of seven states to receive a \$13 million grant through a competitive application process to increase access to Advanced Placement programs, especially in underserved areas of the state. Virginia's AP training and incentive program will include extensive training of teachers, identification and cultivation of lead teachers, additional time on task for students, and financial incentives based on academic results. The project is led by the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center, and funding is provided by ExxonMobil. With this support, Virginia will expand its leadership position in AP participation and results.

**Dual enrollment.** Like Advanced Placement, dual enrollment provides an opportunity for high school students to take college courses. The courses count toward their high school graduation requirements and provide transferable college credit. Courses may be delivered by high school teachers engaged as adjunct college faculty, or by teachers employed by a community or senior college. Courses may be delivered in the high school or college setting. Dual enrollment has several benefits – it introduces students to postsecondary education, and if offered on a college campus, introduces them to the college environment, providing an opportunity to encourage them to continue with their postsecondary education. It also provides college credit, and some students even complete the requirements for an associate degree while they are in high school. The Commonwealth has set a goal to increase utilization of dual enrollment, and from 2002 to 2006 the number of high school students taking dual-enrollment courses from community colleges nearly doubled.

## Public engagement and communications

The Council has identified the need to build public will for changes in education policy and practice, and to encourage students to pursue rigorous coursework and credentials. With funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation through the National Governors Association Honor States Grant Program, the Council has developed a communications plan, and has engaged an experienced professional communications firm to develop a public engagement campaign on these issues.



## Expanding options for students to blend rigorous academics with career and technical education

### New technical diplomas

Recognizing the growing skills gap in Virginia, the 2007 General Assembly passed legislation directing the Board of Education to create a new Technical Diploma, with requirements that meet or exceed the requirements of a Standard Diploma and include a concentration in career and technical education. The Governor proposed an amendment, accepted by the Assembly, to add an Advanced Technical Diploma with more rigorous academic requirements. The Board of Education has opened the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia to add the requirements for Technical and Advanced Technical Diplomas approved by the 2007 General Assembly. Development of the proposed technical diploma requirements is currently under way, and is likely to incorporate a demonstration of workplace-readiness skills. There will be several opportunities for public comment over the course of the next year as the regulatory process advances.

### Exemplary standards for career and technical education

Virginia has received a grant from the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices to improve science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. The grant is supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Intel Foundation. The purpose of the grant is to develop model programs in career and technical education (CTE) that will expand options

for the general population of students to acquire STEM literacy and other critical knowledge, skills and credentials to prepare them for high-demand, high-skill and high-wage careers in Virginia. These programs will be partnerships of business and industry, public schools, community colleges and universities, and local government, including regional workforce and economic development officials.

The grant will provide for the development of Governor's Career and Technical Academies and a Governor's Exemplary Standards Award Program for Career and Technical Education. The exemplary standards program is a continuous quality improvement process engaging K-12 and higher education, the business community and state, regional and local officials. The opportunity to earn the Governor's Exemplary Standards distinction will create an incentive for programs to meet high academic standards and improve other measures of program quality, strengthen their partnerships and alignment with postsecondary education and industry, and demonstrate relevant and positive outcomes.

### Governor's Academies

Governor's Career and Technical Academies will offer career pathways addressing both immediate regional skill gaps and longer-term STEM-related strategic gaps for Virginia. Through high standards, recognition, acceleration options, and industry and higher education partnerships, these programs will directly challenge current belief structures about career and technical education. They will serve as model programs for the transformation of CTE throughout Virginia and the nation.

### Career pathways

A career pathway, as defined by the Workforce Strategy Center, is a series of connected education and training programs and support services that enable individuals to secure employment within a specific industry or occupational sector, and to advance over time to successively higher levels of education and employment in that sector. Each step on a career pathway is designed explicitly to prepare for the next level of employment and education. Nursing provides a good example, with training programs for nurse aides, licensed practical nurses, associate degree or diploma registered nurses, baccalaureate-prepared nurses and advanced practice nurses at the masters level, as well as doctorally prepared nurse educators and researchers. Through a partnership among the secondary, community college, college/university, and business/industry communities, Virginia is developing career pathways that articulate learning and requirements for careers, with multiple entry and exit points.

### Improving other transitions

#### School readiness

The Start Strong Council concluded its activities this year with recommendations to expand access to high-quality preschool for at-risk students. On August 16, Governor Kaine announced details of his Start Strong pre-kindergarten proposal at the Governor's Summit on Early Childhood Education, unveiling a voluntary program that gradually will expand access to high-quality preschool for more of Virginia's four-year-olds. Start Strong will build on the existing network of public and private providers, removing barriers to access such as geography and family income, potentially serving an additional

17,000 at-risk four-year-olds by the year 2012. The program will be phased in over the next two budget cycles. By the year 2012, up to 67 percent of Virginia's four-year-olds could be enrolled in a high-quality preschool setting. This is an important step in ensuring that students are prepared at each stage of the educational continuum. As several experts have noted, college begins in preschool.

#### Ninth-grade transition

This year concludes Virginia's participation in the National Governors Association Honor States Grant Program, through which 30 Virginia Honor Schools piloted strategies to increase high school graduation and college readiness. These include strategies to ease the transition from middle school to high school. Failure and grade retention are most common in ninth grade, and data show that students who are retained in the ninth grade are significantly more likely to drop out and less likely to graduate. Strategies such as small learning communities, summer transition programs and additional student advising, support and tutoring have been tested during the two-year grant period. Results of these strategies are being analyzed for presentation in November, and the Virginia Department of Education will summarize lessons learned and best practices from these pilots for dissemination to all Virginia middle and high schools.

#### Graduation and degree completion

The Board of Education committee studying policies to reduce the number of dropouts and improve graduation rates continued its work over the last year. The Board of Education adopted an increased graduation rate target for accountability under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, and initiated

the regulatory process to amend the Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia, to which it will consider adding graduation rates. Current high school seniors are the first graduating class for which longitudinal data will be available to calculate four-year graduation rates using the broadly accepted National Governors Association Graduation Rate Compact formula.

Community colleges and public four-year colleges have adopted explicit targets for increasing student retention, progression and degree completion. Improvement in these indicators is a goal of the higher education restructuring legislation, and individual targets are established and monitored in conjunction with the State Council of Higher Education. Six Virginia community colleges are participating in Achieving the Dream, a multi-year national initiative to help more students succeed – especially students from groups that have traditionally faced significant barriers to success, including low-income students and students of color. In addition, 2007 legislation established a community college transfer grant that will encourage students to complete associate degrees at community colleges, and will provide additional need-based support for degree completion at four-year institutions.

#### Community college to four-year college

One of the goals of higher education restructuring and subsequent legislation has been to improve the transition of students from community colleges to four-year colleges. Through systemwide negotiated agreements, students who graduate from a Virginia community college with an associate's degree and a minimum grade point average are **guaranteed admission** to many of the Commonwealth's

colleges and universities, including Virginia Tech, the University of Virginia, and the College of William and Mary. There are now 24 such agreements in place, more than half of which were negotiated in the last year. There has also been excellent progress in establishing and clarifying agreements governing the transfer of credits for community college courses.

The 2007 General Assembly approved a **community college transfer grant**, providing additional need-based financial aid for students who complete an associate degree at a community college and transfer to a four-year college to complete a baccalaureate degree. The legislation provides a \$1,000 grant for all eligible students, with an extra \$1,000 for students who pursue undergraduate work in engineering, math, nursing, teaching or science. This mechanism is expected to increase the number of students completing the associate degree before transferring and the number of students who pursue additional education in these high-demand fields.

#### Creating a robust longitudinal-data system

In 2006-07, the Commonwealth launched VITAL (Virginia Improves Teaching and Learning), a longitudinal-data system that provides key information to educators and policymakers who are responsible for preparation, licensure, employment, retention, and support of successful P-12 teachers for Virginia schools. With funding through a Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant from the U.S. Department of Education, VITAL (formerly known as TEAL II) was developed collaboratively



by the Virginia Department of Education, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and the Virginia Association of Colleges for Teacher Education as a major vehicle for improving teacher education programs; strengthening accountability and accreditation processes; informing policy and funding decisions; and furthering understanding of teacher development and effectiveness. All teacher education programs, including career switcher and alternate route programs, began in Fall 2006 to enter data on their students in the pipeline. Additional components of the system, such as follow-up surveys of beginning teachers, will be implemented during the coming year. For additional information see <http://research.schev.edu/teal2>.

Virginia received a \$6.1 million grant this year from the U.S. Department of Education to enhance the Commonwealth's nationally recognized Educational Information Management System (EIMS) for collecting, reporting, and analyzing student data from school divisions. The grant will enable the Virginia Department of Education to move EIMS to the "next level" by developing capability within the system for the electronic exchange of student records between Virginia public schools and for school counselors and high school students to forward transcripts to participating colleges and universities. The grant also will fund the creation of an easy-to-use Web-based user interface for EIMS and additional training for teachers, school counselors and administrators who use the system. Virginia was one of 13 states to receive grants to improve or develop longitudinal-data systems.

The General Assembly has supported the

development of EIMS through the appropriation of more than \$13 million since 2004. We are entering the fourth year of longitudinal data collection, and the class of 2008 will be the first full high school cohort for which we will be able to provide accurate graduation rates that fully account for student mobility and other factors. Other accomplishments to date include the assignment of unique identifiers to all students, integrating multiple reporting requirements into a single, statewide student-record collection, and a data warehouse accessible to school division personnel that contains six years of state assessment data with the ability to disaggregate results by student subgroup and classroom. All state-administered preschool programs were added to the system this year, and this will eventually allow evaluation of the impact of preschool on student achievement.

# Recommendations

16

## Continue the P-16 Education Council

The Council continues to advance productive discussion and collaboration among public education, community colleges, four-year colleges, and the business community. It has launched several initiatives in response to its 2006 recommendations as accepted by the Governor. Efforts to develop a common standard for college and workforce readiness and align high school standards to that definition; to encourage more students to take rigorous courses in high school, and to integrate rigorous academics with career and technical education; and to strengthen Virginia's capacity to use data to inform education policy decisions are making good progress, and hold great promise to raise the educational achievement of Virginia's students. These initiatives can be counted as successes of the P-16 approach led by the Council, and provide a strong foundation for continued collaboration across educational levels and among education, business and government.

## Expand representation on the Council

The Council further recommends expanding business representation on the Council, through representatives of groups such as the Virginia Business Council, Chamber of Commerce and/or Manufacturers Association, and adding the Commonwealth's chief workforce development officer and a representative from the Virginia Career Education Foundation.

## Continue focus on readiness

Raising educational attainment remains Virginia's greatest challenge for continued economic prosperity. Current knowledge and skills gaps will be exacerbated by retirement of the baby boomers, and changes in demographics threaten to lead to declines in overall educational attainment unless Virginia is successful in increasing the postsecondary completion rates of populations traditionally underrepresented in higher education. Because of these forces, school readiness and readiness for postsecondary education and work should remain the Council's focus in the coming years. Much additional work remains in this arena.

- Continue to support the recommendations of the Start Strong Council to expand access to high-quality preschool programs for Virginia's four-year-olds.
- Meet the commitments Virginia made in joining the 30-state American Diploma Project Network. Work is underway to meet the first commitment. Once this is in place, the remaining three items can be addressed:
  1. Develop a working definition of postsecondary readiness and align our high school standards and assessments with the expectations of postsecondary educators and employers.

2. Incorporate an assessment of readiness into our high school assessment program.

3. Require students to take a rigorous curriculum that prepares them for postsecondary education and the workplace in order to earn a high school diploma.

4. Ensure that we have strong, results-oriented accountability systems for high schools and public higher education institutions.

■ Increase the success of high school students in mathematics, science, and pre-engineering, to increase the pipeline for undergraduate and graduate students in these areas. Guide new initiatives to create exemplary standards and specialized academies for career and technical education and to develop comprehensive career pathways in targeted fields spanning K-12, postsecondary and adult education.

■ Improve teaching quality through improved increased collaboration between teacher preparation programs and school divisions, targeted professional development, rigorous teacher evaluation and support, and innovative incentive programs.

■ Create and support a culture of evidence based on the development and appropriate use of a virtual, comprehensive,

longitudinal-data system that documents student outcomes, barriers to success, and successful preparation.

1. Support the Commonwealth's efforts to achieve the ten essential elements of a state longitudinal-data system identified by the national Data Quality Campaign<sup>1</sup>.

2. Encourage researchers to conduct longitudinal analyses of student experience to determine key factors of college and workplace readiness.

This goal and its two strategies are included in the 2007-13 Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Virginia, as approved by the State Council of Higher Education, and builds on the initial recommendation of the P-16 Education Council to invest in sophisticated analyses of the effectiveness of Virginia's education system with particular emphasis on smooth transitions from one level to the next.

1 According to the National Data Quality Campaign, each state's P-12 education system is unique, yet it is clear that there is a set of 10 essential elements that are critical to a longitudinal-data system. Virginia has six of the ten, as denoted by the asterisks.

1. \* A unique statewide student identifier that connects student data across key databases across years
2. \* Student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information
3. \* The ability to match individual student's test scores from year to year to measure academic growth
4. \* Information on untested students, and the reasons they were not tested
5. A teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students
6. Student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned
7. Student-level college readiness test scores
8. \* Student-level graduation and dropout data
9. The ability to match student records between the P-12 and higher education systems
10. \* A state data-audit system assessing data quality, validity and reliability

## Notes

